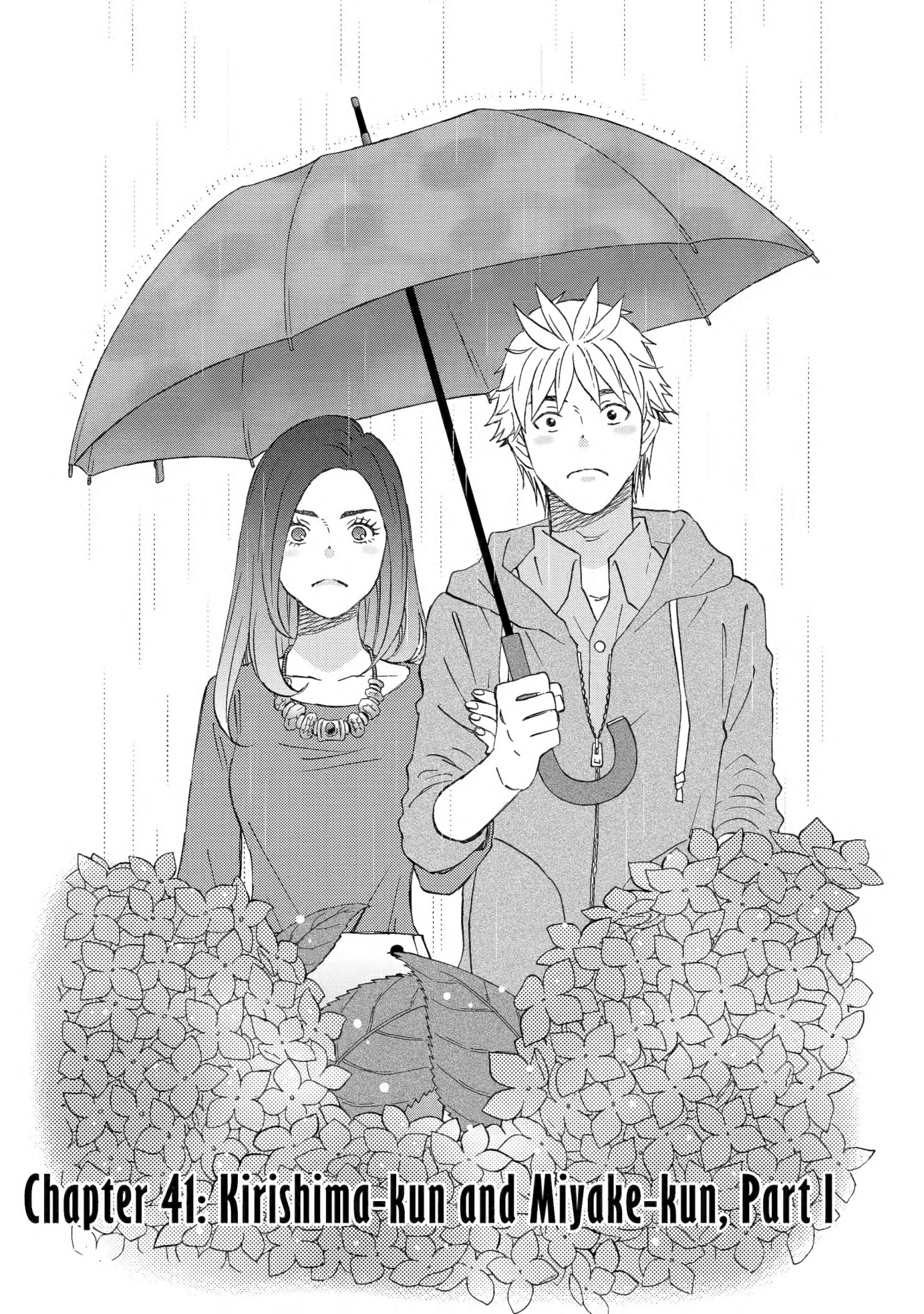
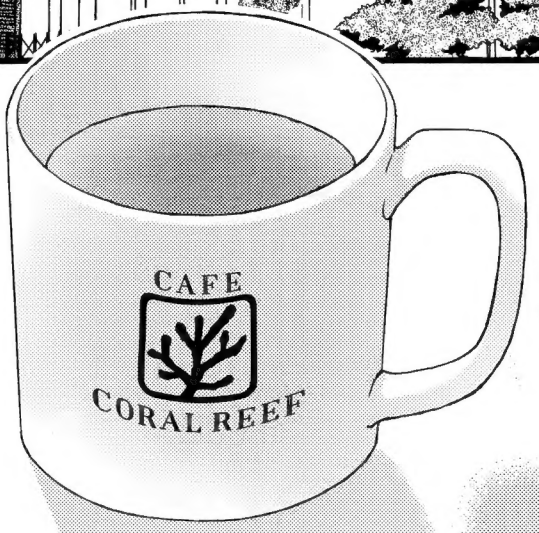
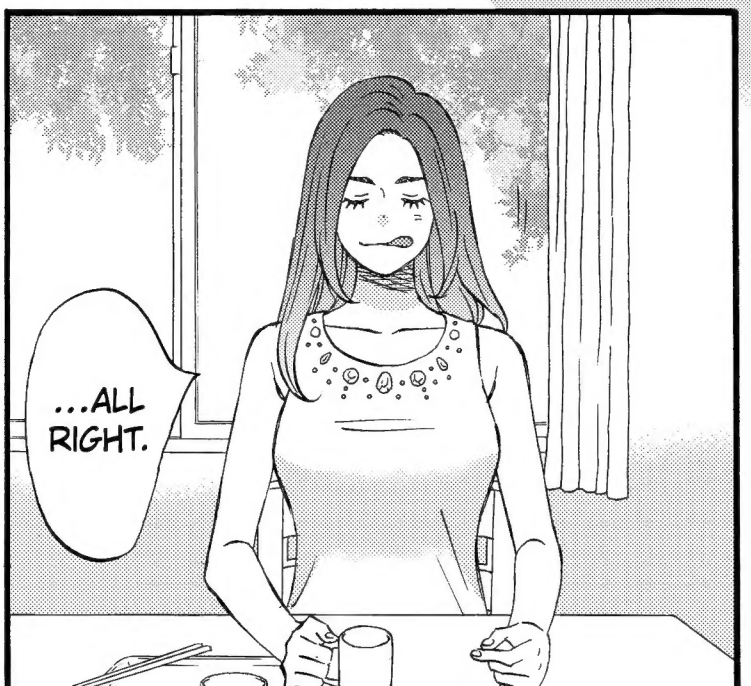
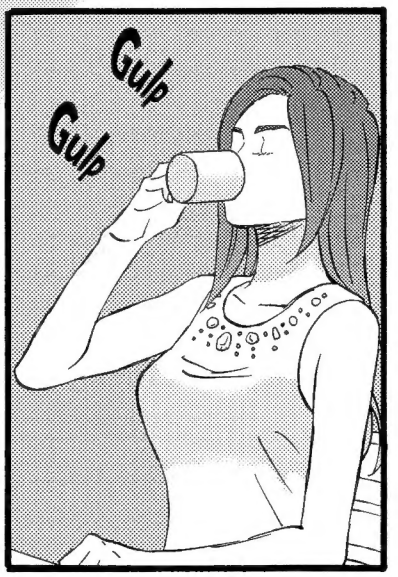
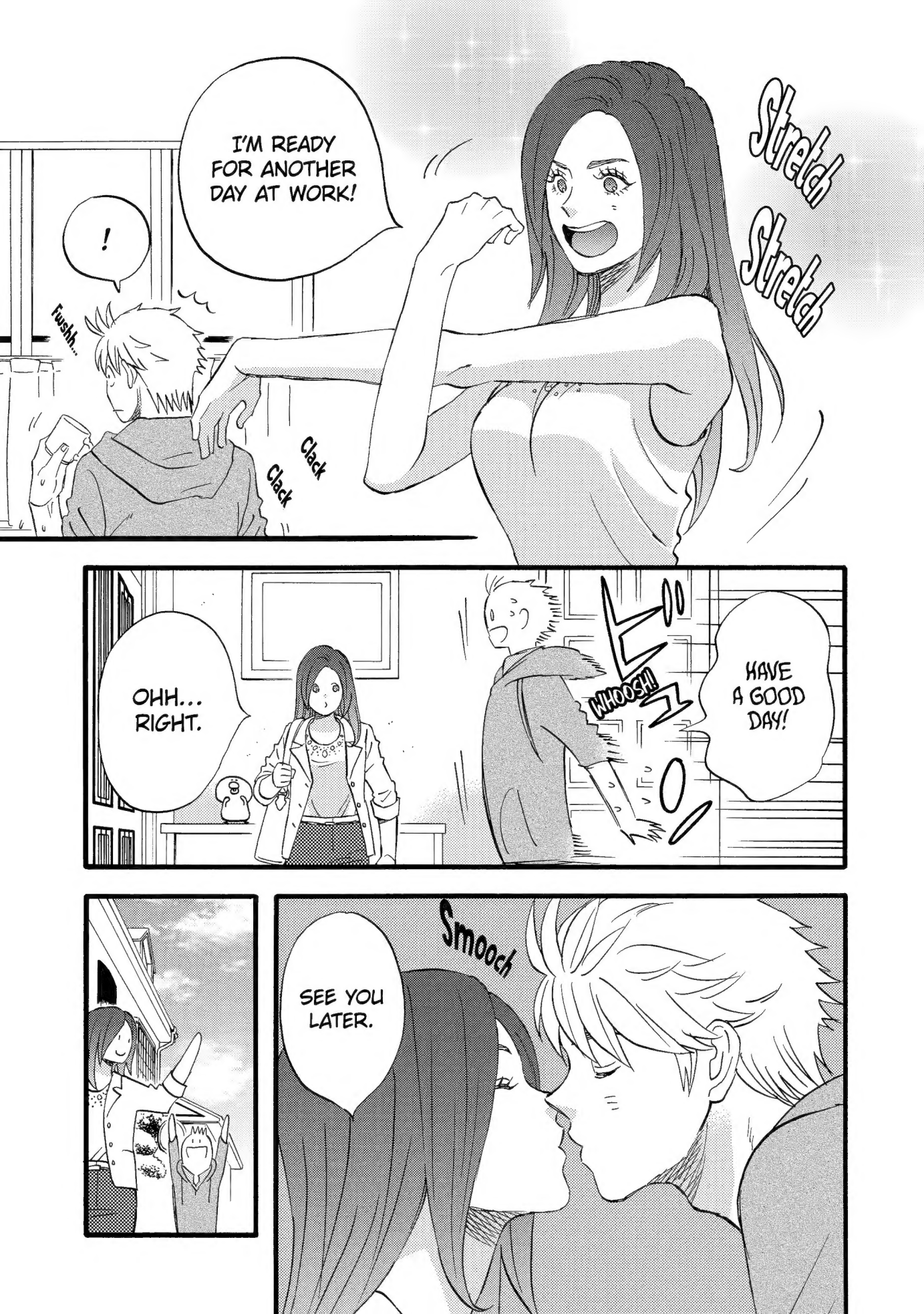


Chapter 41: Kirishima-kun and Miyake-kun, Part I


CAFE
CORAL REEF

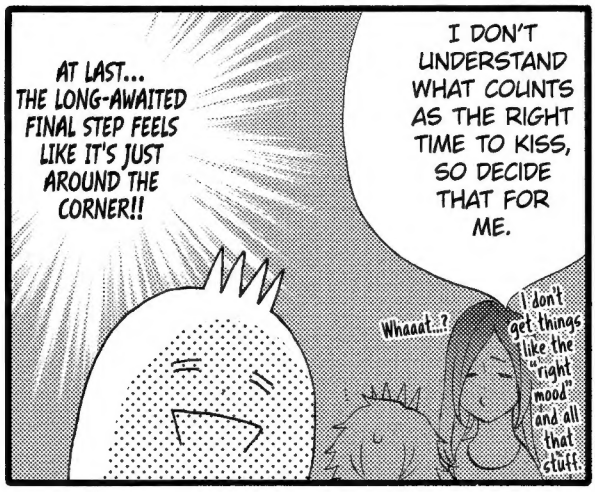

...ALL RIGHT.

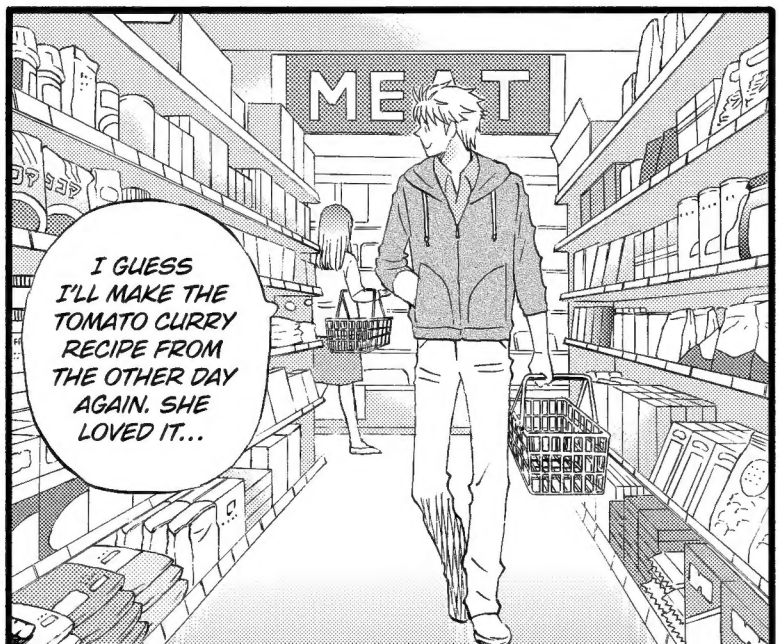

Gulp
Gulp

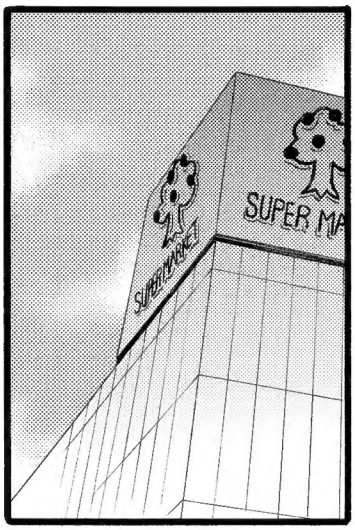

I'M READY FOR ANOTHER DAY AT WORK!
!
Fwshh...
Stretch
Stretch
Clack
Clack
OHH... RIGHT.
WHOOSH!
HAVE A GOOD DAY!
Smooch
SEE YOU LATER.

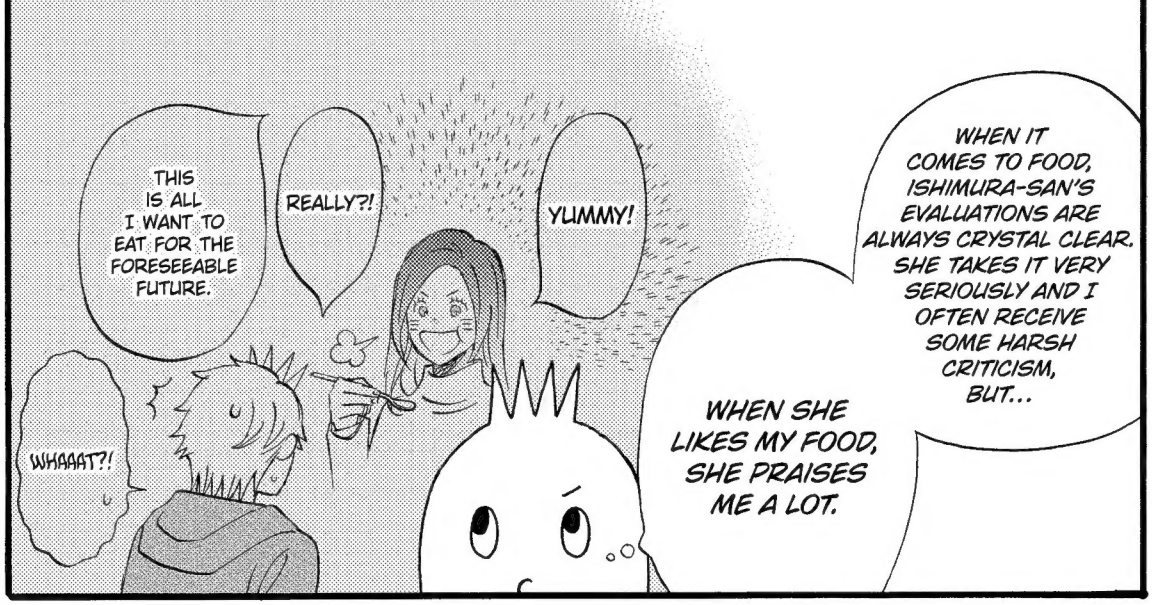
I SUCCEEDED IN MAKING IT A DAILY RITUAL TO SEND ISHIMURA-SAN OFF TO WORK WITH A KISS...!!
Good morning.
Good morning!
DID YOU SEE THAT?
THAT'S RIGHT!

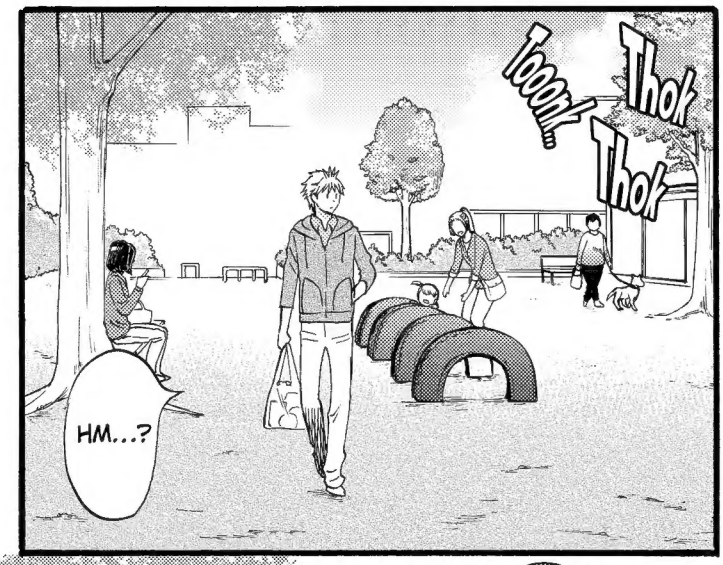
OH, BOY... I'M PUMPED! I'LL DO MY BEST AT CLEANING, WASHING, AND COOKING TODAY TOO!!

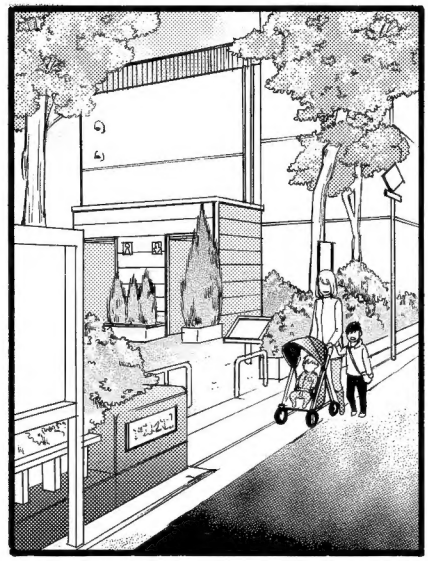

AT LAST... THE LONG-AWAITED FINAL STEP FEELS LIKE IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER!!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT COUNTS AS THE RIGHT TIME TO KISS, SO DECIDE THAT FOR ME.
Whaaat...?
I don't get things like the "right mood" and all that stuff.


MEAT
I GUESS I'LL MAKE THE TOMATO CURRY RECIPE FROM THE OTHER DAY AGAIN. SHE LOVED IT...


SUPER MA
SUPERMARKET


THIS IS ALL I WANT TO EAT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.
REALLY?!
YUMMY!
WHAAAT?!
WHEN SHE LIKES MY FOOD, SHE PRAISES ME A LOT.
WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD, ISHIMURA-SAN'S EVALUATIONS ARE ALWAYS CRYSTAL CLEAR. SHE TAKES IT VERY SERIOUSLY AND I OFTEN RECEIVE SOME HARSH CRITICISM, BUT...

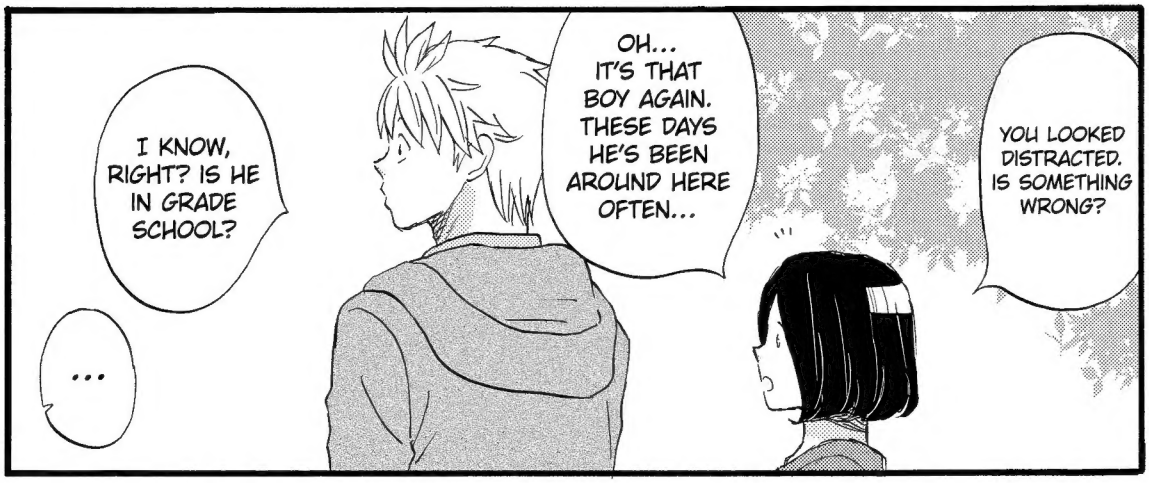

Tooonk
Thok
Thok
HM...?



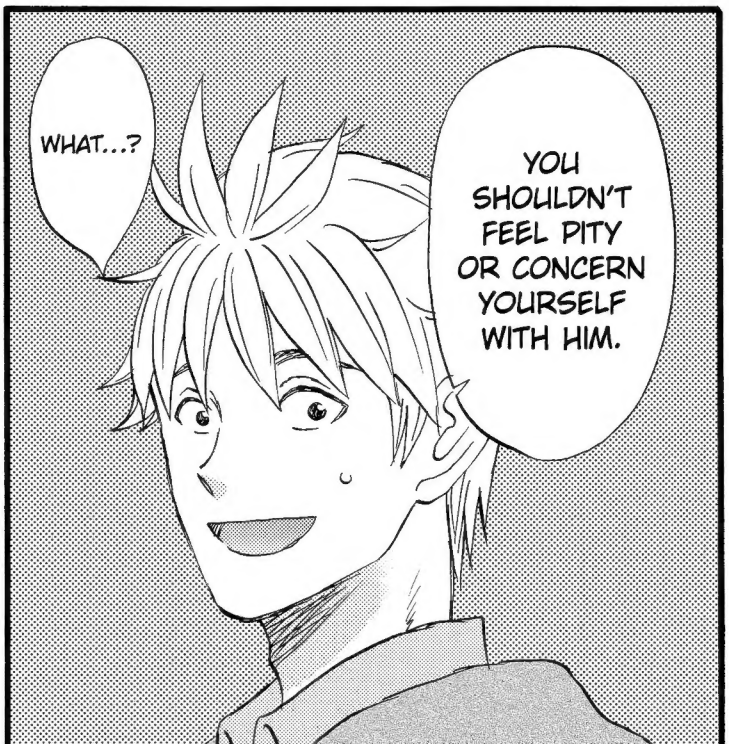
Tooonk...
Thok

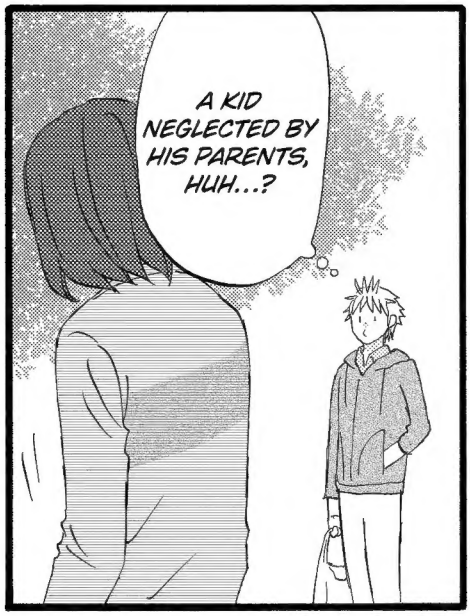
OH. HELLO.
KIRISHIMA-SAAAN!
Pat

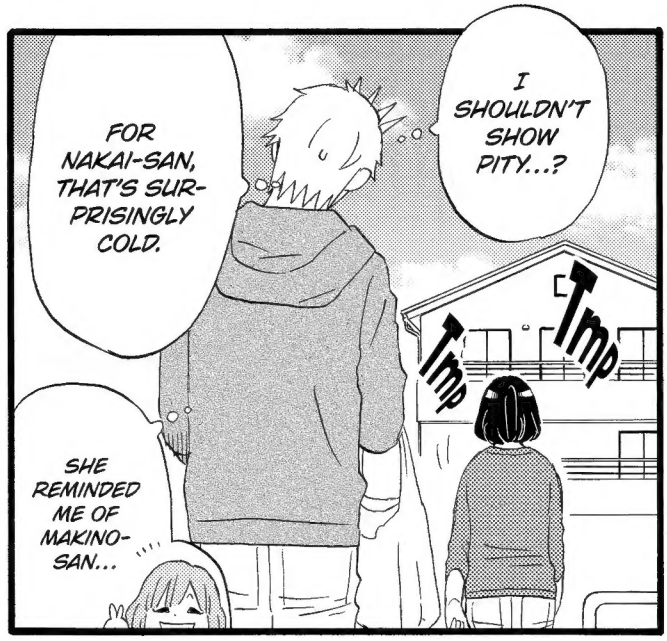
THAT KID... I'VE BEEN SEEING HIM AROUND A LOT LATELY...


YOU LOOKED DISTRACTED. IS SOMETHING WRONG?
OH... IT'S THAT BOY AGAIN. THESE DAYS HE'S BEEN AROUND HERE OFTEN...
I KNOW, RIGHT? IS HE IN GRADE SCHOOL?
...

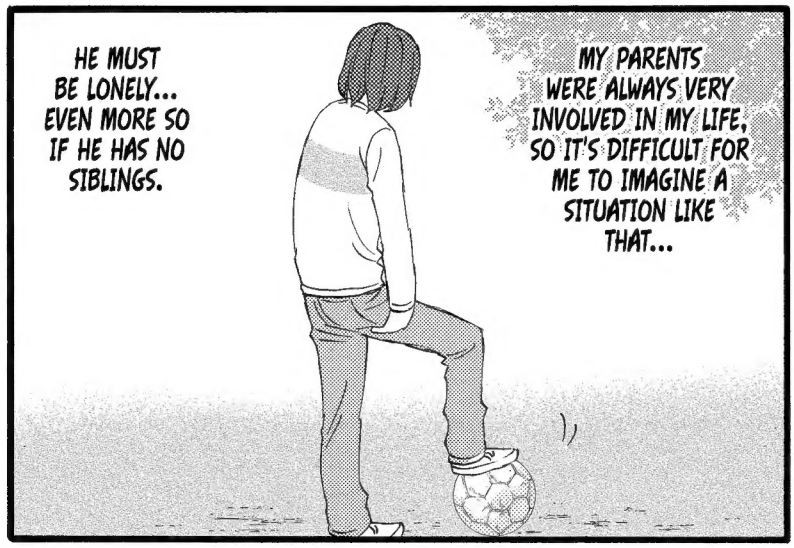
HE'S ONE OF THOSE NEGLECTED CHILDREN. HE HANGS OUT HERE BECAUSE HIS PARENTS DON'T CARE ABOUT HIM.
OH, DEAR.


YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL PITY OR CONCERN YOURSELF WITH HIM.
WHAT...?


A KID NEGLECTED BY HIS PARENTS, HUH...?


I SHOULDN'T SHOW PITY...?
FOR NAKAI-SAN, THAT'S SURPRISINGLY COLD.
Tmp
Tmp
SHE REMINDED ME OF MAKINO-SAN...

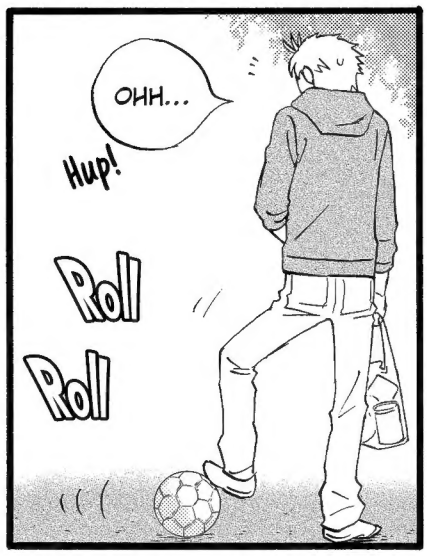
HE'S ALWAYS ALONE. DOES HE NOT HAVE FRIENDS EITHER?
Hmm...

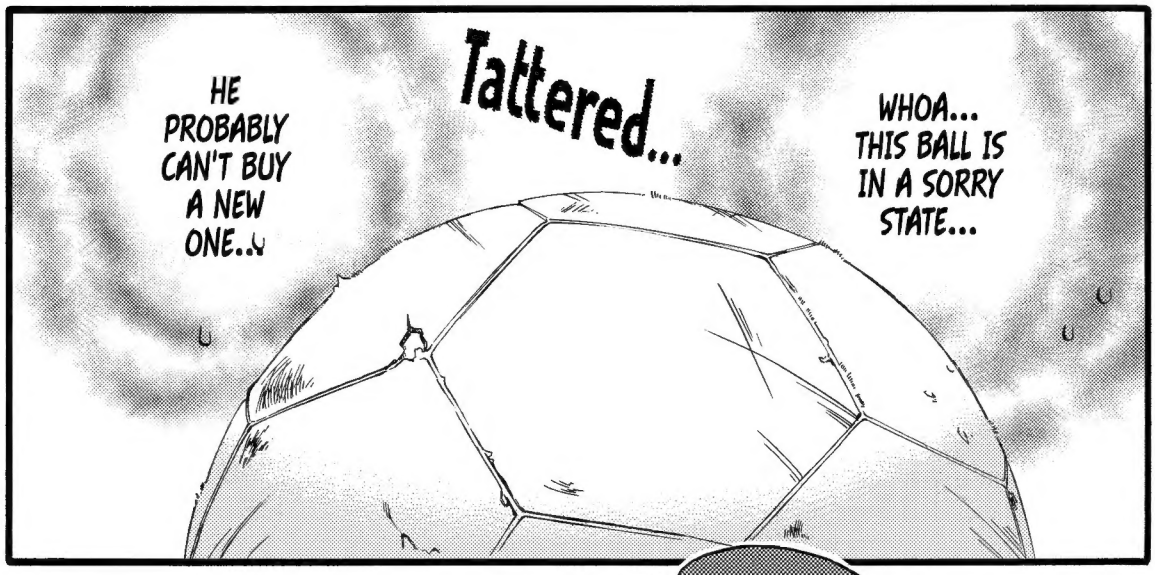

HE MUST BE LONELY... EVEN MORE SO IF HE HAS NO SIBLINGS.
MY PARENTS WERE ALWAYS VERY INVOLVED IN MY LIFE, SO IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO IMAGINE A SITUATION LIKE THAT...

Dmp
OH.

GIVEN HIS FAMILY SITUATION, HE MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO INVITE THEM TO HANG OUT AFTER SCHOOL...
Thok
Thok
I MEAN, THERE'S A PRETTY GOOD CHANCE THAT HE JUST DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE THEM.

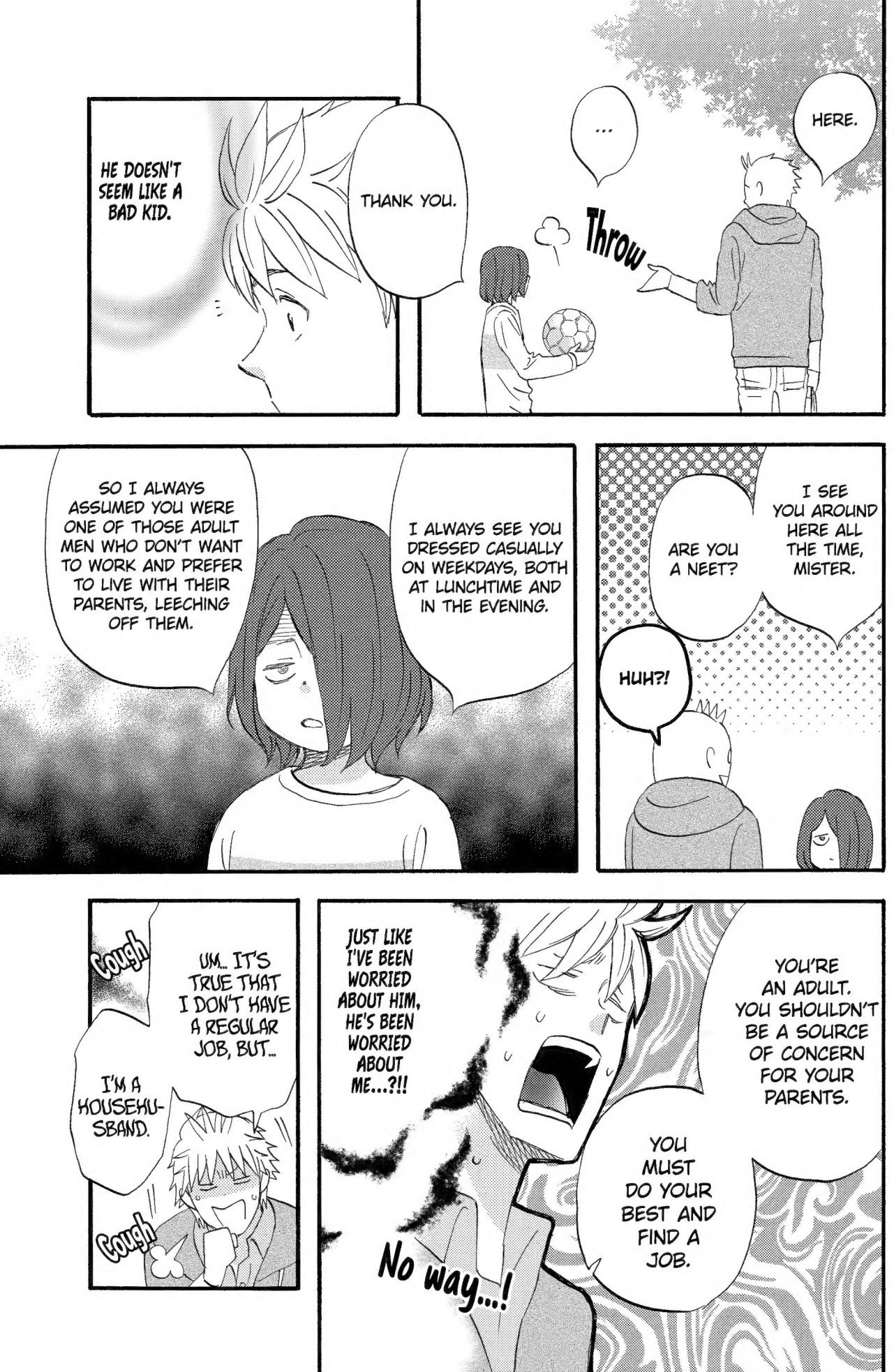
EXCUSE ME!
Grab
Dash
Dash


OHH...
Hup!
Roll
Roll

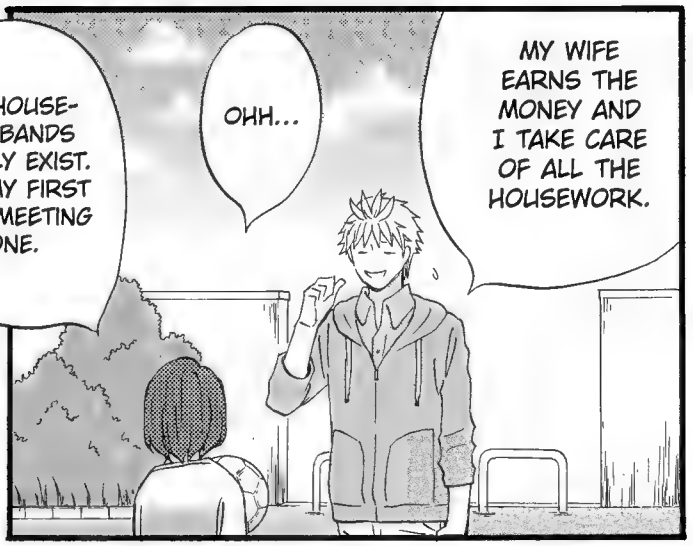

HE PROBABLY CAN'T BUY A NEW ONE...
Tattered...
WHOA... THIS BALL IS IN A SORRY STATE...

NOT GOOD... I'M REALLY STARTING TO FEEL SORRY FOR HIM...
Ahem!

HE LOOKS LIKE HE CARRIES SOME INCREDIBLE DARKNESS IN HIM...
NOW THAT I'VE GOTTEN A GOOD LOOK AT HIS FACE...

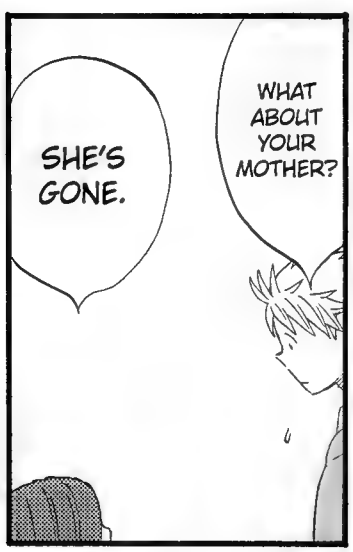

HERE.
...
Throw
THANK YOU.
HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A BAD KID.
I SEE YOU AROUND HERE ALL THE TIME, MISTER.
ARE YOU A NEET?
HUH?!
I ALWAYS SEE YOU DRESSED CASUALLY ON WEEKDAYS, BOTH AT LUNCHTIME AND IN THE EVENING.
SO I ALWAYS ASSUMED YOU WERE ONE OF THOSE ADULT MEN WHO DON'T WANT TO WORK AND PREFER TO LIVE WITH THEIR PARENTS, LEECHING OFF THEM.
YOU'RE AN ADULT. YOU SHOULDN'T BE A SOURCE OF CONCERN FOR YOUR PARENTS.
YOU MUST DO YOUR BEST AND FIND A JOB.
JUST LIKE I'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT HIM, HE'S BEEN WORRIED ABOUT ME...?!!
No way...!
UM... IT'S TRUE THAT I DON'T HAVE A REGULAR JOB, BUT...
I'M A HOUSEHUSBAND.
Cough
Cough

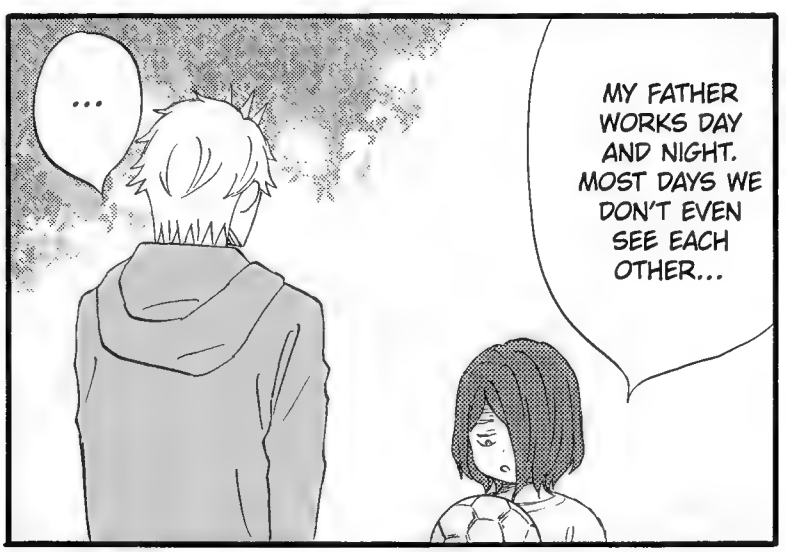
...WELL, I DON'T THINK WE ARE THAT RARE...
Heh heh heh...

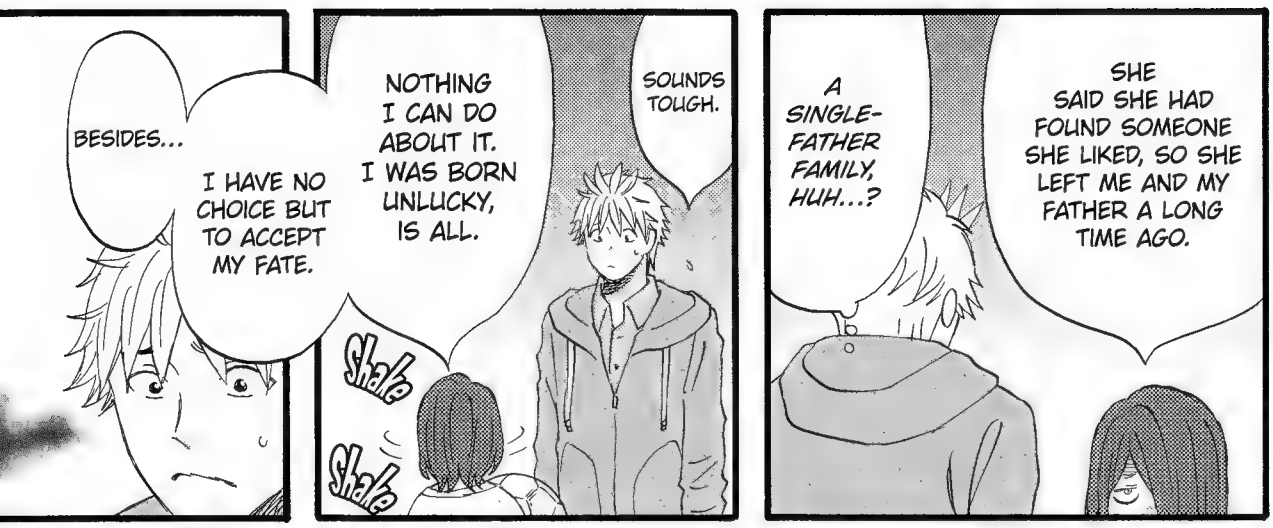

SO HOUSE-HUSBANDS REALLY EXIST. IT'S MY FIRST TIME MEETING ONE.
OHH...
MY WIFE EARNS THE MONEY AND I TAKE CARE OF ALL THE HOUSEWORK.

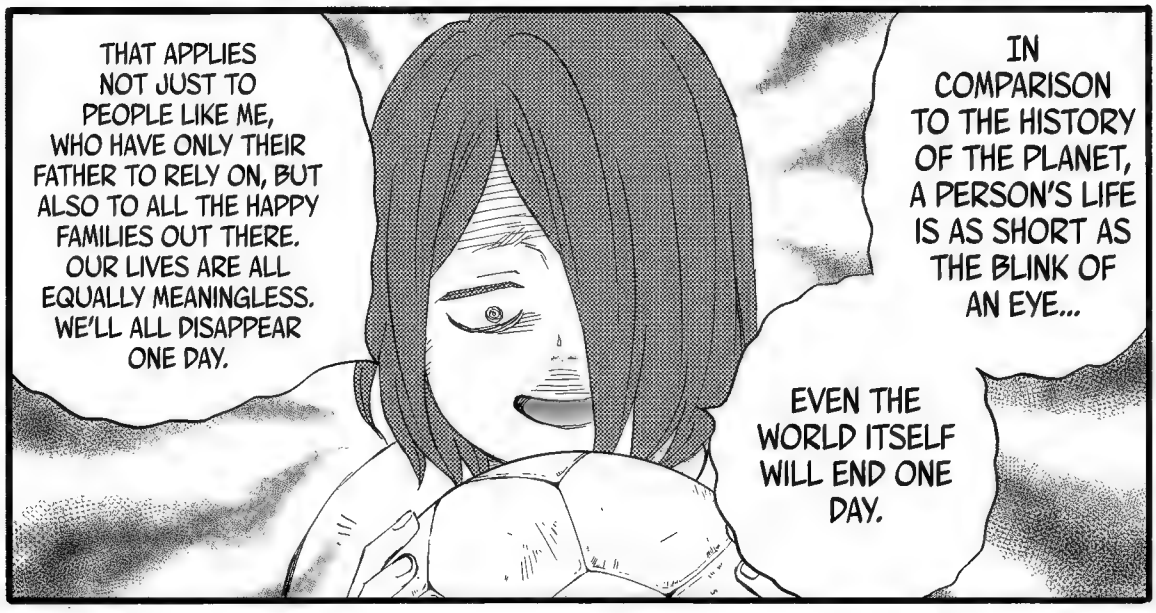
...SOUNDS NICE.

ALL THE PITY I HAD IS GONE!
SHIT... WHAT A SHOCK. HE THOUGHT I WAS A NEET...


SHE'S GONE.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER?


...
MY FATHER WORKS DAY AND NIGHT. MOST DAYS WE DON'T EVEN SEE EACH OTHER...

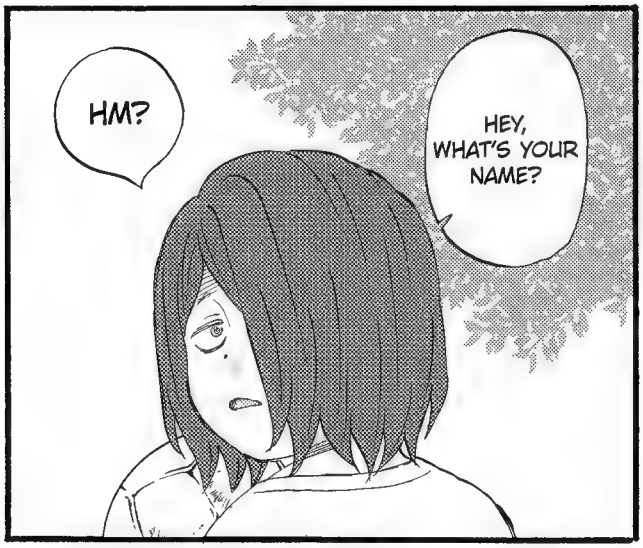

BESIDES...
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT MY FATE.
NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT. I WAS BORN UNLUCKY, IS ALL.
SOUNDS TOUGH.
Shake
Shake
A SINGLE-FATHER FAMILY, HUH...?
SHE SAID SHE HAD FOUND SOMEONE SHE LIKED, SO SHE LEFT ME AND MY FATHER A LONG TIME AGO.


THAT APPLIES NOT JUST TO PEOPLE LIKE ME, WHO HAVE ONLY THEIR FATHER TO RELY ON, BUT ALSO TO ALL THE HAPPY FAMILIES OUT THERE. OUR LIVES ARE ALL EQUALLY MEANINGLESS. WE'LL ALL DISAPPEAR ONE DAY.
IN COMPARISON TO THE HISTORY OF THE PLANET, A PERSON'S LIFE IS AS SHORT AS THE BLINK OF AN EYE...
EVEN THE WORLD ITSELF WILL END ONE DAY.

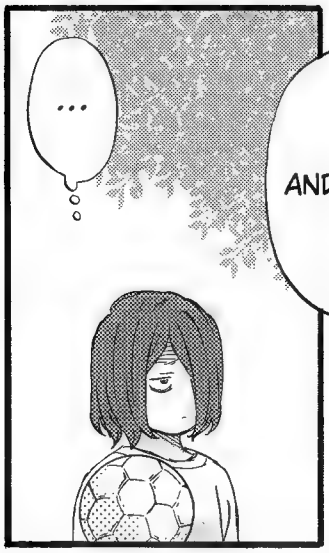
HE'S DARKNESS ITSELF!
HE DOESN'T CARRY DARKNESS IN HIM...
Heh heh heh...
I HOPE THAT DAY COMES SOON...
Heh heh heh heh!

DO YOUR BEST AT HOME, OKAY? AND TREASURE YOUR WIFE...
Tmp
Tmp

Oh!
NO WORRIES.
I'M SORRY FOR TAKING YOUR TIME.


HM?
HEY, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

...

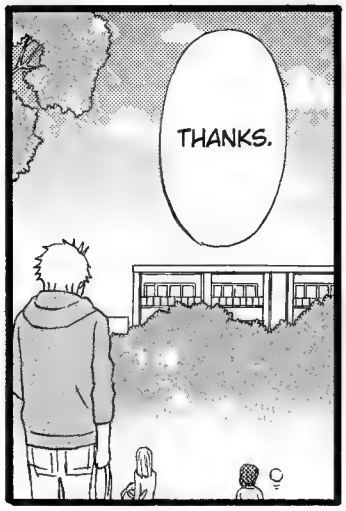

...
AND YOU?

I'M KIRISHIMA SHIROU.

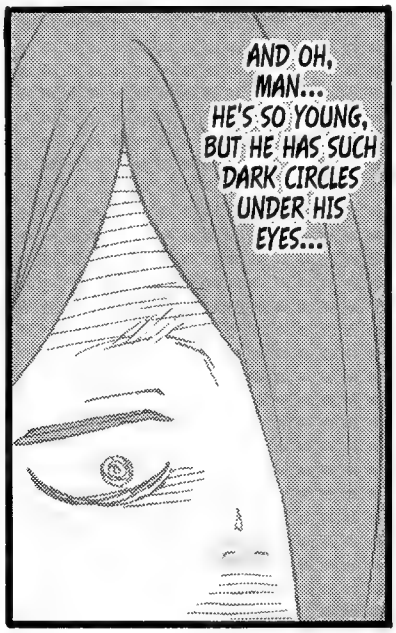
...
YOU TOO, MIYAKE-KUN. DO YOUR BEST AND TREASURE YOUR FATHER.

MIYAKE-KUN, HUH?
I'M MIYAKE... MIYAKE JUN.

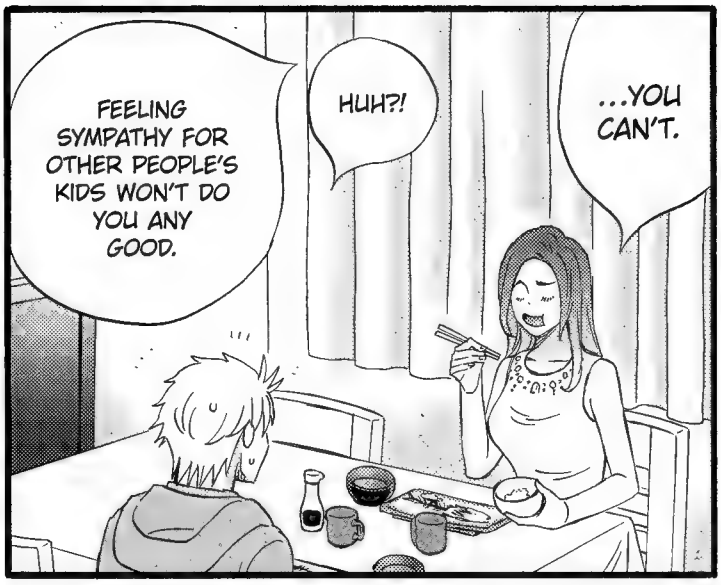
I ASSUMED HE WAS IN GRADE SCHOOL BECAUSE HE'S SHORT, BUT THE WAY HE SPOKE TO ME SUGGESTS HE'S IN JUNIOR HIGH.
STILL... GIVEN HIS FAMILY SITUATION, OVERCOMING HIS DELUSIONAL, PESSIMISTIC MINDSET WON'T BE EASY.

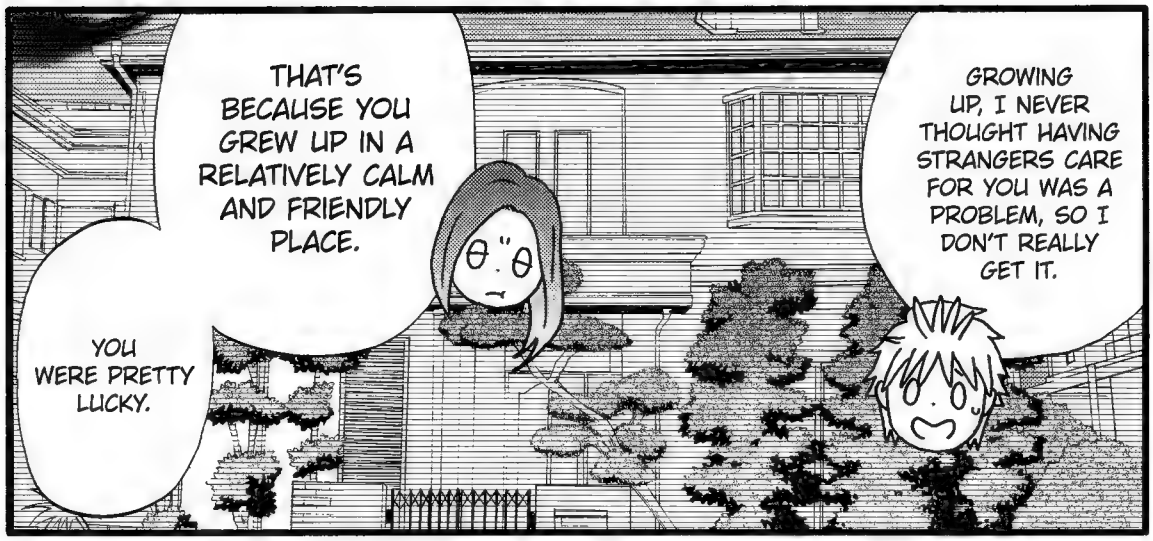

THANKS.

I FEEL BAD FOR HIM...
...SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.

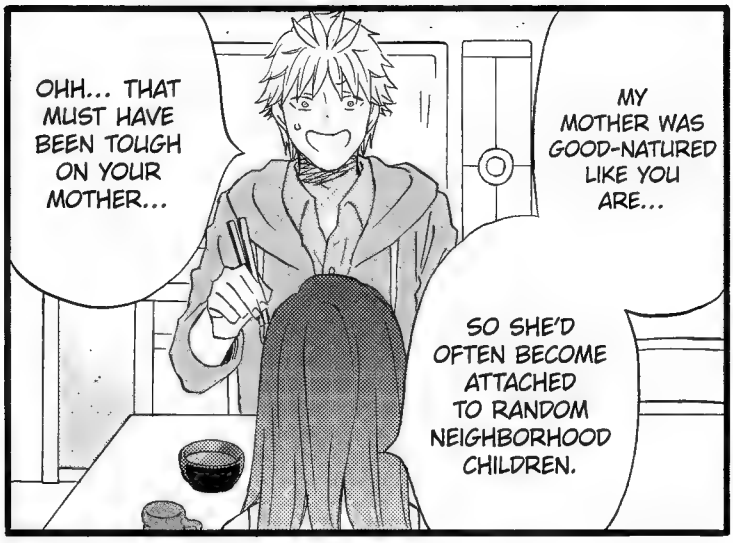

AND OH, MAN... HE'S SO YOUNG, BUT HE HAS SUCH DARK CIRCLES UNDER HIS EYES...

IS IT THAT BAD THAT I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM?
...ONE OF MY HOUSEWIFE FRIENDS TOLD ME SOMETHING SIMILAR.

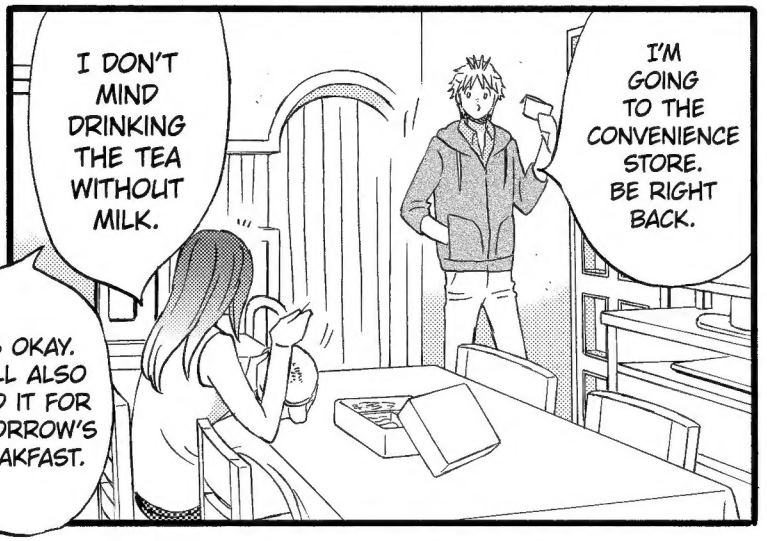

FEELING SYMPATHY FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S KIDS WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.
HUH?!
...YOU CAN'T.

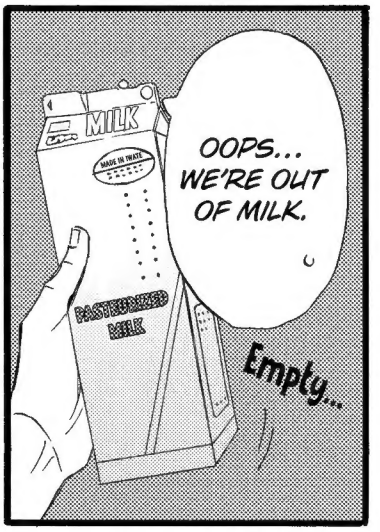

YOU WERE PRETTY LUCKY.
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU GREW UP IN A RELATIVELY CALM AND FRIENDLY PLACE.
GROWING UP, I NEVER THOUGHT HAVING STRANGERS CARE FOR YOU WAS A PROBLEM, SO I DON'T REALLY GET IT.

ANYWAY...

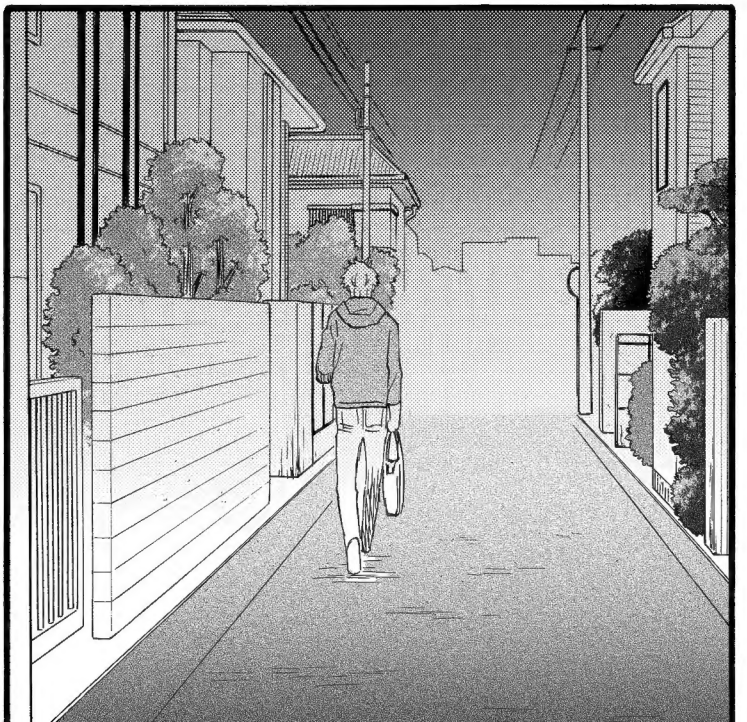

OHH... THAT MUST HAVE BEEN TOUGH ON YOUR MOTHER...
MY MOTHER WAS GOOD-NATURED LIKE YOU ARE...
SO SHE'D OFTEN BECOME ATTACHED TO RANDOM NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN.

DON'T GIVE HIM FOOD. UNDERSTAND?
...IT KINDA FEELS LIKE WE'RE DEALING WITH A STRAY CAT...
A CHILD WHO LACKS DISCIPLINE IS NO DIFFERENT THAN A WILD ANIMAL.

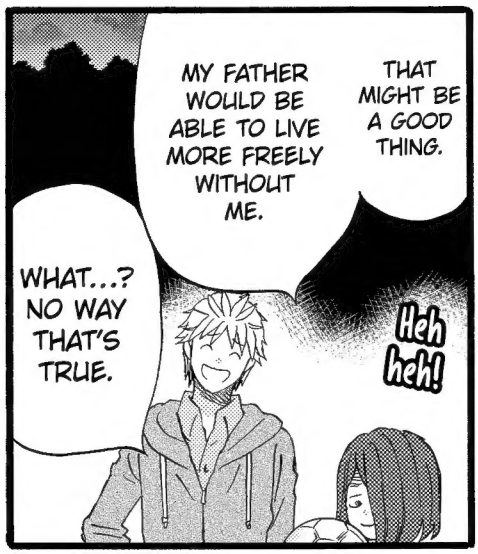

I'M GOING TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. BE RIGHT BACK.
I DON'T MIND DRINKING THE TEA WITHOUT MILK.
IT'S OKAY. WE'LL ALSO NEED IT FOR TOMORROW'S BREAKFAST.


OOPS... WE'RE OUT OF MILK.
MILK
MADE IN TRAYS
PASTEURIZED MILK
Empty...

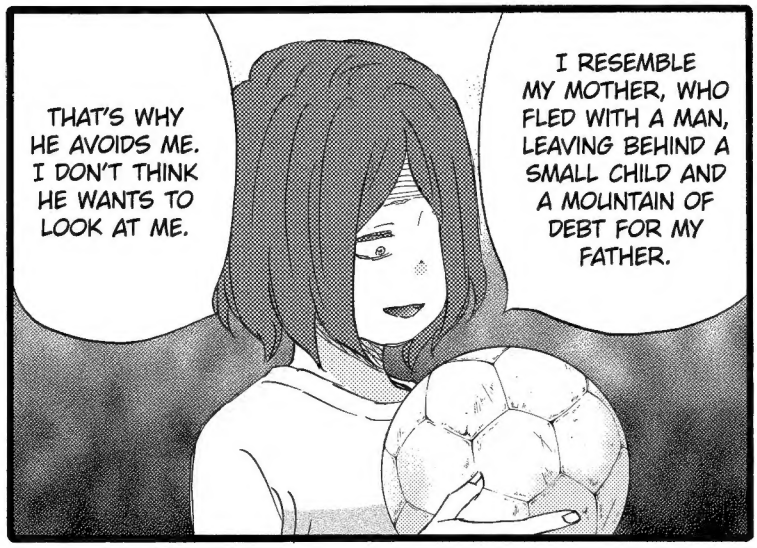
...HM?



Thok
Thok
IT'S DANGEROUS. HE COULD BE KIDNAPPED BY SOME PERVERT...
WHAAAT...? HE'S STILL HERE AT THIS LATE HOUR?
Toooonk...
IT DOESN'T LOOK THAT WAY TO ME. I BELIEVE HE WAS TAUGHT GOOD MANNERS.
DOES HE REALLY LACK DISCIPLINE?
MIYAKE-KUN!
OH. KIRISHIMA-SAN.
Tmp
"THE GOOD GUYS ARE TREATED KINDLY."
ISHIMURA-SAN ALSO SAID...
...DIDN'T SHE?
HE FEELS DIFFERENT FROM A CERTAIN SHITTY BRAT I KNOW.
HE EVEN THANKED ME EARLIER AND APOLOGIZED FOR TAKING MY TIME. HE SEEMS LIKE A GOOD KID...


MY FATHER WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE MORE FREELY WITHOUT ME.
THAT MIGHT BE A GOOD THING.
WHAT...? NO WAY THAT'S TRUE.
Heh heh!

IT'S RISKY TO BE OUT HERE ALONE. YOU MIGHT GET KIDNAPPED BY A PERVERT... OR A SCARY GUY.
IT'S PRETTY LATE. SHOULDN'T YOU GO HOME?
OHH...

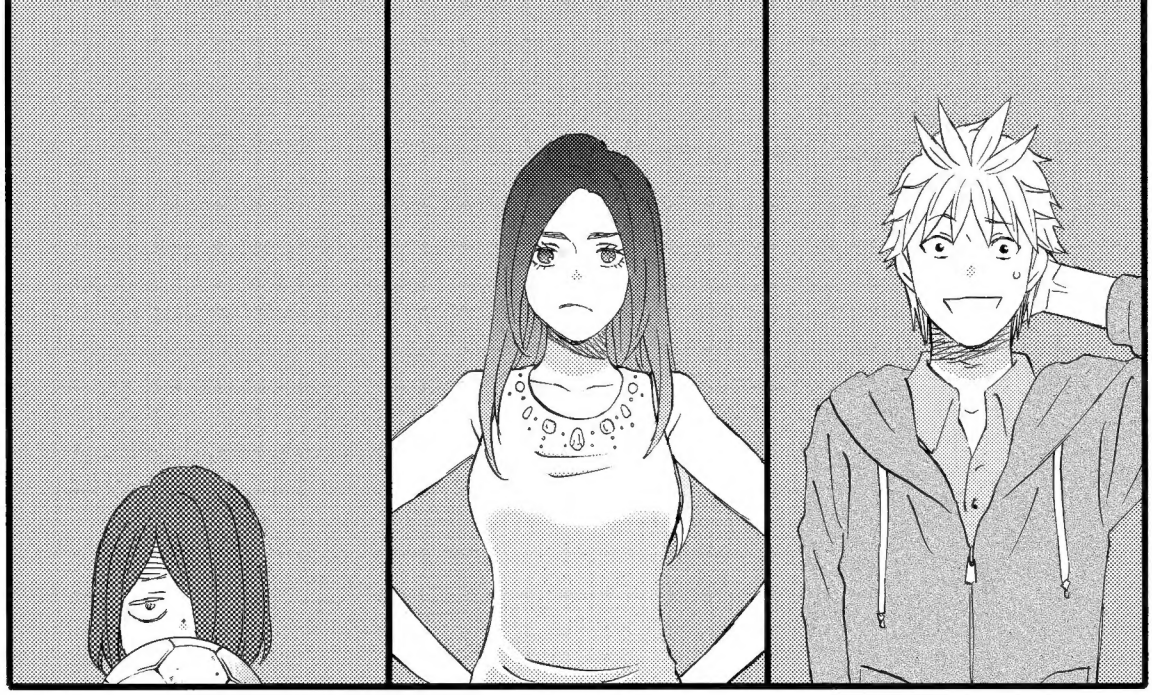

THAT'S WHY HE AVOIDS ME. I DON'T THINK HE WANTS TO LOOK AT ME.
I RESEMBLE MY MOTHER, WHO FLED WITH A MAN, LEAVING BEHIND A SMALL CHILD AND A MOUNTAIN OF DEBT FOR MY FATHER.

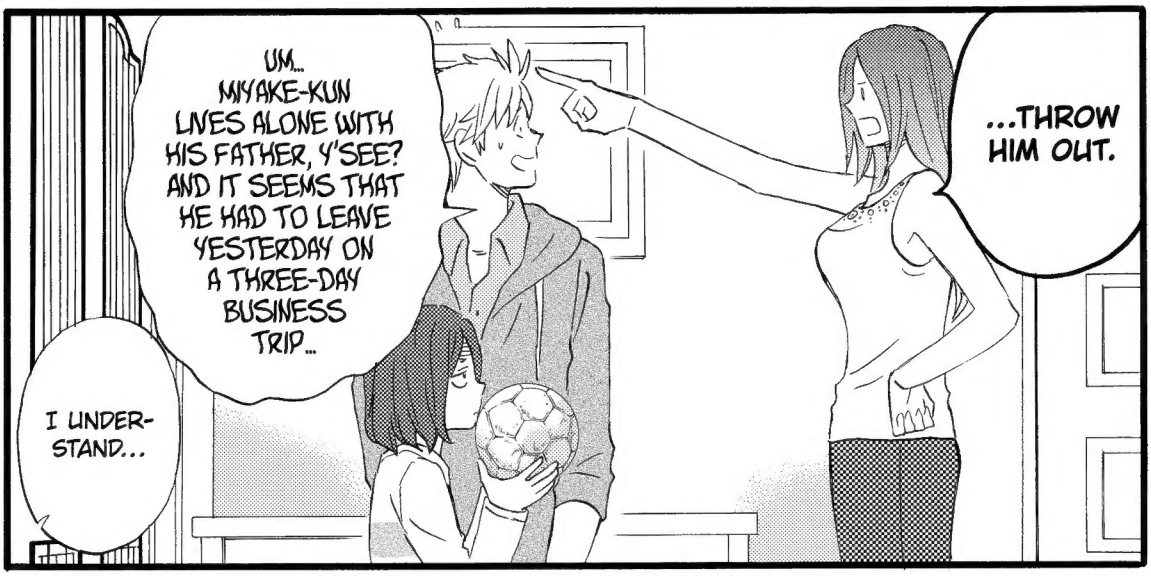
YOU SEE, MY FACE LOOKS LIKE MY MOTHER'S.

...

NO WAY...
AS FOR ME, THERE'S NO ONE WAITING. YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY.

OH...
ANYWAY, ISN'T YOUR WIFE WAITING FOR YOU AT HOME? YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY HER.
Dmp




UM... MIYAKE-KUN LIVES ALONE WITH HIS FATHER, Y'SEE? AND IT SEEMS THAT HE HAD TO LEAVE YESTERDAY ON A THREE-DAY BUSINESS TRIP...
...THROW HIM OUT.
I UNDER-STAND...

KIRISHIMA-KUN COULDN'T HELP BUT GET INVOLVED WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD KID.
COULD YOU PLEASE NOT TREAT HIM AS IF HE'S JUST SOME STRAY CAT?!!
I UNDER-STAND THAT WE CAN'T KEEP HIM.